

VZCZCXRO7894  
PP RUEHDE  
DE RUEHRH #2893/01 1091423  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 191423Z APR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6478  
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2563  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0508

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 002893

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DHAHRAN SENDS  
PARIS FOR ZEYA, LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [SOCI](#) [KPAO](#) [KMPI](#) [SA](#)  
SUBJECT: GULF WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION: CIVIL SOCIETY, SAUDI  
STYLE

11. (SBU) Summary: Jameyat Fatat al Khaleej is one of the oldest women's charitable societies in Saudi Arabia, and provides an example of a civil society organization welcomed by the government. Founded and run by women from the Eastern Province's most prominent business families, and with close ties to the royal family, the charity focuses on help for the poor, early childhood education, and training programs. The society benefits informally from the resources, and large expatriate community, of Saudi Aramco. End summary.

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ONE OF THE FIRST  
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12. (U) PAO met with Badriah Al-Dulaijan, Chairperson of the Board of Directors for the Jameyat Fatat al Khaleej, and members of the organization's staff on April 16th 2006. Thirty-nine years ago a group of Saudi teenagers, daughters within prominent business families in the Eastern Province, started the charitable organization. Jameyat Fatat al Khaleej, translating to "The Gulf Women's Association", now has over 350 dues paying members and over 250 junior (under 18) members. Nine board members are elected by and from the membership every four years. Over 50 people are full time employees of Jameyat Fatat Al Khaleej.

13. (U) The organization runs charitable works in a wide range of areas. The most prominent, and the one with the most regional influence, is the Early Childhood Center. The Center offers pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes, trains 25 post-BA teachers, and offers 25 high school graduates with a 3-year diploma certificate in Early Childhood Education. The Center has developed and published its own Arabic language curriculum for young learners, and has participated in national and international conferences on Early Childhood Education. The programs of the Center are available on a fee-for-services basis, with scholarships available.

14. (U) Other major programs are all mostly restricted to activities within the local city of Khobar. The society assists over 1000 poor families, funds the education of about 350 children, and provides support for orphans. Periodically, the organization launches public health awareness campaigns on topics like breast cancer and lung cancer. The association also runs Koran Memorization classes. Responding to community needs, and the lack of quality educational opportunities, particularly for women, the association has run a number of diploma programs over the years.

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EASY MONEY

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¶15. (SBU) While registered, and officially supported, by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Jameyat Fatat al Khaleej regularly holds fundraisers for most of its budget. Mrs. Al-Dulaijan said that the annual budget is about 2.5 million Saudi riyals (about \$670,000 US), of which 600,000SR (\$160,000 US) comes from the government's budget. The rest is raised privately. "Two week ago we had a dinner and raised 200,000 SR," said Mrs. Al-Dulaijan, indicating that it was easy to raise money during times of high oil prices. "Contributions are often just a phone call away," she said.

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GOOD CONNECTIONS  
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¶16. (SBU) During PAO's tour of the facility, she was introduced to the members of the health committee. The wife of the Minister of Social Affairs, and the wife of the President of King Faisal University were among the seven women in the meeting. The organization also has close connections with the Saudi royal family, with princesses contributing their support for specific projects. The group also collaborates with other prominent Saudi philanthropists. Abdul Latif al Jamil, for instance, gives rewards to the top 15 students receiving Jameyat Fatat Al Khaleej assistance.

¶17. (SBU) Lina El-Abia, the Director of the Early Childhood Center for over 20 years said that the center is unusual in that it does not use the government's curriculum. "We had our own, excellent curriculum, before the government even started theirs. Why would go backward to use the government's? Now," she continued, "every Monday teachers from the public schools

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come to observe our work." The Ministry of Education does not force them to use their curriculum, and pays for weekly trainings from the Center's staff. The Center also draws on the cultural resources of Saudi Aramco, bringing ideas and activities into a Saudi educational institution that are not available in public schools.

¶18. (SBU) Comment: Started by the business community, this association has allowed the female members of the Eastern Province's prominent business families a venue for activities. Jameyat Fatat al Khaleej seems to enjoy support that is unavailable for other civil society organizations in the Eastern Province. Their success may be based on close connections to the established business community, government and the royal family, and a focus on seemingly uncontroversial issues. End comment.

(APPROVED: SPEIDEL)  
OBERWETTER